DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 051 777 HE 002 298

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TITLE	The Changing Purposes of Higher Education.
INSTITUTION	Arizona State Univ., Tempe. Coll. of Education.
PUB DATE	7 Jan 71
NOTE	7p.; Paper presented at colloquium held at the College of Education, University of Arizona, Kiva, January 7, 1971
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational History, *Higher Education, *Institutional Role

ABSTRACT

This paper briefly traces the historical development and purposes of American higher education from the colonial and early national period, through the growth of the modern university, to contemporary attitudes and practices. (JS)

ED051777

THE CHANGING PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A paper presented by:

Paul C. Fawley
Visiting Professor of Educational Administration
from The University of Utah
at a
Colloquium held at the University of Arizona
College of Education Kiva
Thursday, January 7, 1971, 3:30 P.M.

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Introduced by:

Dr. Henry E. Butler, Jr., Head
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Dr. Butler: Paul C. Fawley is Professor of Educational Administration at the University of Utah since 1949 and was Chairman of the Department from 1953 to 1969. He has participated in school surveys, written research articles for journals and periodicals. He is currently on sabbatical leave from the University of Utah and is a Visiting Professor here at the University of Arizona in the Department of Educational Administration. He is teaching the class Educational Administration 365, Higher Education. More than that, he has participated widely in our activities in the College and has attended departmental meetings and has gone into the field on every occasion when we can spring him loose. In every way he has been a participating member of the University faculty. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of Westminster College in Salt Lake City, a member of Phi Kappa Phi Phi Delta Kappa, American Association of University Professors, and the American Association of School Administrators. More than all this, he is a warm, concerned and friendly person, a colleague in every sense of the word. It is a pleasure to present to you this afternoon, Dr. Paul C. Fawley.

Dr. Fawley: Thank you, Dr. Butler. The topic for discussion has to do with the changing purposes of higher education. I will reveal some of the events in the historical development of higher education in the United States and discuss some of the current issues concerned with purpose. Since we are having a "colloquium", I want to reserve ten minutes for questions. In this way we can have an exchange of ideas as a topic such as this does not lend itself to one-way conversation. The free exchange of ideas is pretty basic.

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The development of higher education in the United States can be divided into three relatively distinct periods, namely: (1) The Colonial and early national period extending from the founding of Harvard College in 1636 to the close of the Civil War in about 1870; (2) The Emergence of the University period from 1870 to about 1960; (3) and the modern period with the rise of sponsored research, graduate teaching assistants on a large scale, student revolt, increasing enrollments, financial crises from year to year marks a period of change in governance and priorities as higher education is evaluated. There is no way of knowing how long such a classification will make sense but for the present, the last ten years have been eventful in the development of higher education and may have lasting impact on future events. Only history will give us the answer.

It has been three hundred thirty-four years since the establishment of Harvard College in 1636. There has been no period in history when the world has seen more change and I am sure that if it were possible for Master Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard College to return today, it is doubtful if he would recognize higher education and probably neither would he appreciate it. Certainly, things were different in his day. Let me read briefly from New England's First Fruits concerning the purposes in the establishment of Harvard College:

In Respect of the Colledge, and the
Proceedings of "Learning" Therein

1. After God had carried us safe to New England, and wee had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our liveli-hood, rear'd convenient places for Gods worship, and setled the Civill Government: One of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministery to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the Dust. And as wee were thinking and consulting how to effect this great Work; it pleased God to stir up the heart of one Mr. Harvard (a godly Gentleman, and a lover of Learning, there living amongst us) to give the one halfe of his Estate (it being in all about 1700.l.) towards the erecting of a Colledge: and all his Library: after him another gave 300.l. others after them cast in more, and the publique hand of the State added the rest: the Colledge was, by common consent, appointed to be at Cambridge, (a place very pleasant and accommodate) and is called (according to the name of the first founder) Harvard Colledge.

The Edifice is very faire and comely within and without, having in it a spacious Hall; (where they daily meet at Commons, Lectures and Exercises), and a large Library with some Bookes to it, the gifts of diverse of our friends, their chambers and studies also fitted for, and possessed by the Students, and all other roomes of Office necessary and convenient, with all needfull Offices thereto belonging: And by the side of the Colledge a faire Grammar Schoole, for the training up of young Schollars, and fitting them for Academicall Learning, that still as they are judged ripe, they may be received into the Colledge of this Schoole: Master Corlet is the Mr., who hath very well approved himselfe for his abilities, dexterity and painfulnesse in teaching and education of the youth under him.

Over the Colledge is master Dunster placed, as President, a learned conscionable and industrious man, who hath so trained up, his Pupils in the tongues and Arts, and so seasoned them with the principles of Divinity and Christianity, that we have to our great comfort, (and in truth) beyond our hopes, beheld their progresse in Learning and godlinesse also; the former of these hath appeared in their publique declamations in Latine and Greeke, and Disputations Logicall and Philosophicall, which they have wonted (besides their ordinary Exercises in the Colledge-Hall) in the audience of the Magistrates, Ministers, and other Schollars, for the probation of their growth in Learning, upon set dayes, constantly once every moneth to make and uphold: The latter hath been manifested in sundry of them, by the savoury breathings of their Spirits in their godly conversation. Insomuch that we are confident, if these early blossomes may be cherished and warmed with the influence of the friends of Learning, and

> lovers of this pious worke, they will by the help of God, come to happy maturity in a short time.
>
> Over the Colledge are twelve Overseers chosen by the generall Court, six of them are of the Magistrates, the other six of the Ministers, who are to promote the best good of it and (having a power of influence into all persons in it) are to see that every one be diligent and proficient in his proper place. . . . ."New England's First Fruits" reprinted in Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, American Higher Education: A Documentary History, pp. 6-7, University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Probably no more than half of any graduating class of Harvard ever became ministers of the gospel. People saw in higher education, even from the earliest times in our country, the value of higher education as a cultural purpose as well as a religious one and there developed early the concept of the enrichment of life through a general and thorough education.

Philip Lesly, a Chicago Public relations counsel in a speech before an American College Public Relations Association group included in his remarks the following:

> I believe it is not unfair to say that the higher educational establishment in the United States has been high on its own delusions--delusions of equality for every person who achieves the age of 18--of what a college can do for masses of reluctant adolescents--of the panacea of education as a quick cure for all ills--of the presence of a mystical tribe of "geniuses" on the college campus who are superior to all men and whose dicta must determine the decisions of the lesser beings who manage the vast enterprises that make modern civilization work.
>
> Higher education today may well be the LSD of the masses, the greatest source of delusionary expectations.

We have all heard the old argument that there is economic value in a college education. I suppose this is as true today as at any other time in our history provided that you are able to acquire employment in your specialty at a desirable level. The Census Bureau has recently released figures indicating that lifetime earnings of a person with a bachelor's degree at present value of the dollar would be $579,653. This is up from $464.561 in 1958. On the average, according to the Census Bureau, the average college graduate will earn $218,000 more in a lifetime than will a high school graduate.

These figures are alluring and may be misleading. If there are 40% of the population graduating with bacherlor's degrees and the greatest possible l need during the next decade will be 20%, what about the earnings of the other 20% who will have to choose to do something other than what they were prepared to do to earn a satisfactory living?

When economic data are released indicating the health of the economy, figures are much more impressive if unemployment percentages are low, preferably below 4% of the total work force. These kinds of figures are much easier to achieve if the colleges and universities are babysitting a few million adults who are going to college even though some of them do not necessarily belong there and

others are in college aimlessly. So, in looking at one of the newer purposes of higher education, we must give credence to the "babysitting" objective, which merely means that one of the newer purposes of higher education is to keep young people off the labor market.

One of the basic problems of discovering the purposes of higher education has to do with the question: "Who shall go to college?" In recent years this number and the percent of the population has been revised drastically upward. As early as 1963, the American Policies Commission advocated that there should be some higher education for all at least in the junior college. We have certainly moved rapidly in this direction in recent years and I suppose that about 60% of all youth of college age are now in college or are contemplating on going there as soon as possible.

William A. Stearns, who headed Amherst until 1876, had his student beginnings at Harvard in the 1820's. He was conservative in matters educational, political and theological. Stearns was in favor of Scottish common sense. Too much literary or intellectual content in the curriculum might, he feared turn Amherst into a "nursery of pantheism." Reverence for the aged, veneration for parents, for sacred institutions, for wisdom and goodness in character were the qualities he would inculcate in his students.

Mark Hopkins, who in many ways has come to symbolize the old-time professor, won a place in the history of American education, not because he was learned but in part because he considered himself and his task beyond the realm of learning--in that nobler area where the souls of men, especially young men, were touched with moral truth. Hopkins once said to one of his colleagues: "You read books. I don't read books." His great contemporary, Eliphalet Nott at Union once said to a member of his faculty, a professor of Greek: "I care less for Greek than you do, and less for books generally, as a means of educational discipline." Even so both Hopkins and Nott were more than adequately equipped to be two of the great representative professors and college presidents of the era. What they needed was a reservoir of faith, an abiding conviction, a capacity for transferring their confidence in God's rule to others, and they had these in abundance.". . . .Frederick Rudolph Mark Hopkins and the Log p 77

We used to pride ourselves back in the classical period of higher education that something was added in what we called the collegiate way of life. This is the notion that a curriculum, a library, a faculty, and students are not enough to make a college. It is an adherence to the residential scheme of things. It is respectful of quiet rural surroundings, dependent on dormitories, committed to dining halls, permeated by paternalism. It is what every American college has had or conspiciously rejected or lost or sought to recapture; it is comfort and full tobacco jars in a Princeton dormitory; in an urban university it is counselors helping the socially inept to overcome their weaknesses.

We don't hear much about the wildcat spirit here at the University of Arizona. Does it exist? Did it ever exist or is it one of those figments of happy memories that never existed? We used to think we had it, but some say it disappeared with the returning veteran to the campuses following the end of World War II.

The colonial college and the college of the early national period were not

really in the mainstream of American life. Maybe one-half of one percent of the youth of college age were involved in higher education. The frontier was more exciting, and there were many opportunities that did not require college training.

Beginning about 1870 great changes took place in higher education. The First Morrill Act was passed during the time of the Civil War and did much to popularize and democratize higher education. Along with subsequent legislation began a long history of research in agriculture and in the application of basic scientific principles toward the establishment of a better way of life. It is indeed a phenomenon when six percent of the population can provide the food to feed this great nation and at the same time produce an almost unmanageable surplus. We were able to double the yield of corn in this country in a very short period because of the results growing out of research in hybrid corn and in the selective use of fertilizers.

The influence of the German University was felt in the operation of its American counterpart. New disciplines and majors were established: Physics, chemistry, geography, anthropology. The elective system became a part of higher education. No longer did all students have to take Latin, Greek and Hebrew. The secular influence of the established churches began a long and steady decline and their influence in the lives of college students was no longer as apparent as it once was. Relevance entered the picture of program selection and the question "Why must I take this?" began to have some meaning. The fact that it was good for you was no longer a sufficient answer.

The establishment of Johns Hopkins University was an example of the German influence in the development of the graduate school in America. Here as an institution, supurb in faculty and students, and a pace-maker for graduate education. Professional schools generally had their debut during this developmental period--medicine, law, dentistry, education, business and engineering.

College administrators have never liked the dormitory system of student housing on the campuses. The way was opened for the establishment of fraternities and sororities to take care of the student housing. Here was a system, even with its weaknesses, was able to partially solve the problem for many years. It was believed that the dormitory was the hot bed of student dissention and the place where plots were nurtured to burn down buildings, to incite riots, and the like. The elimination of the dormitory would solve most of the difficult student-related problems, so it was thought.

The rise of the university saw the rise of college football. Here was a game that seemed to meet many of the needs of the student body and of the alumni and had appeal for the general public. It was rought and sometimes fatal even to the point that the President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, issued an order that the game had to be modified or he would issue an executive order doing away with it. As a result, the rules were modified, and equipment was built to protect heads, arms, legs and teeth. Football was on its way to greatness. Today, it is still a problem, and no one can predict its future in the collegiate community.

Certain basic assumptions have developed undergirding university life relative

to basic research and experimentation:

1. The universe is inherently worth studying.
2. The material world is not evil, and we need not fear what our researches will disclose.
3. Nature is orderly.
4. Truth is one, and that ultimately there can be no conflict between what is known to be true in one sphere and what is known to be true in another.
5. Human reason is a sound means of acquiring knowledge and ascertaining the truth.
6. There is a relationship between cause and effect, and that therefore the experiments of one person may be tested, and either confirmed or refuted, by the experiments of another.
7. The experimental method is itself satisfactory as a basis for establishing any hypothesis.
8. In any conflict between them, ideas must be subordinated to facts.
9. Ignorance is dangerous, and there is a duty to discover and make known the truth.
10. Antiquity does not of itself accord validity to ideas, however venerable they may seem to be. . . .Baly Denis Academic Illusion, Seabury Press. Greenwich, Conn. 1961 pp 104-5

With the acceptance of the above basic assumptions, the modern university tends to neglect and discard those branches of knowledge that cannot be treated scientifically. Some of the concepts taught by Mark Hopkins and his colleagues back in the 1840's and 1850's have probably been thrown out of the curriculum today and as a result the student is short-changed with part of his education.

Finally, let us take a look at the contemporary university. There has been a rapid change in higher education during the past twenty years. Maybe it began with huge funding of research projects back in the early 1950's. What was once a community of scholars has now become just a community and many, including students, have become disenchanted with the establishment. Students are now participating in the making of decisions having to do with the internal operation of the institution. Generally, the reaction to this change has been favorable. We are beginning to move away from our deification of science and are holding science responsible for its own creations. But perhaps the most widely held view is that of Charles Curran, president of the Catholic Theological Society of America. "If we have learned anything from our whole technological and ecological problem," he says, "it is that we cannot accept as valid the premise that just because science can do something, it should go ahead and do it.

Students are less prone to become liberally educated today than they were formerly. The rapid increase in enrollments to 50--60--70% percent of the college age population has introduced a higher degree of anti-intellectualism on the campuses. Liberal education is not particularly popular; the interest is in completing the requirements for a degree or a license so that it can be converted into a livlihood with a solid economic base. The goals of the students are not compatible with the goals of a love for learning.

A serious problem of contemporary higher education is overexpansion. It is estimated that by 1980 there will be 12,500,000 students compared to the

8,200,000 today. This figure will comprise about 65% of the total college age population. The best estimates indicate that by 1980 our economy will be able to absorb in the labor force a number not exceeding 20% college trained people of the total force employed. This means that there is going to be a serious imbalance with too many people with college educations. With the present emphasis on economic returns, this means that some painful readjustments in people's lives are going to take place. If we are going to plan for post high school education for all, it may mean institutional classifications so that students may go where their education will be most meaningful to them.

It is very difficult to find good solid data on the purposes of higher education. For example, I find only a one-sentence statement in the catalog of the University of Arizona on purposes. I quote:

> Its purpose, in the language of the organic law, is "to provide the inhabitants of this state with the means of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the various branches of literature, science, and the arts.". . . . Catalog. University of Arizona, 1969-71, page 108.

During the past decade we have witnessed a decline in the quality of undergraduate education. We hope the college professor can be lured back into the undergraduate classroom. We have never been able to bridge the gap between high school and college and eliminate a lot of unnecessary duplication in teaching. The "collegial community" must be put back in college learning and going to college must again be personalized and become a highlight in life's experiences. Sponsored research has become more important than undergraduate teaching. We have been willing to modify the purposes of our institution to "get a contract". We don't know yet whether this has been good or bad. It calls to mind the following limerick:

There was a young lady from Kent
Who said she knew what it meant
When men took her to dine
Gave her cocktails and wine;
She knew what it meant--but she went.

Clark Kerr indicated that we didn't know what it meant to accept Federal contracts but "we went" and today we are paying for the neglect of undergraduate teaching.

I have attempted to review the purposes of the early Colonial colleges in America, the purposes during the early national period, the growth and development of the modern university and a quick glance at the contemporary institution. Some of the bloom is off higher education, but it still remains a bulwark of our greatness both past and present. What it holds for the future, only time will tell. We can be certain of one trend - - purposes of higher education are changing.